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Manhattan Madness

Out in the "great open spaces" where men have to be men, wear hair pants, and meet adventure face to face every day, Steve O'Dare, a young college athlete, had been riding range over the broad miles of his great ranch. When he finally decided to go to New York to collect for a train load of stock he had sold to a foreign government his two side-kicks, a pair of cactus flowers, Hank and Zeke, feared that Steve might meet misadventures along the great White Way, and begged to go along as bodyguards. Steve, however, felt that he could resist all the temptations of Broadway and refused their assistance. At the railroad station in "Elko" he arrived resplendent in an eight-quart hat, spurs and chaps, ready for the big adventure.

As he was bidding his friends a tearful farewell, a vision of loveliness, dressed in a smart tailored suit, stepped off the train and crossed to the telegraph office. Steve's heart did a loop-the-loop and his temperature climbed steadily. "All aboard!" shouted the conductor. "Gosh! She can't miss this train," thought Steve and started out to bring her back, bodily, if necessary. The long trip across the United States would be a bleak desert without her. Excited moments, train bells clanging, whistles blowing, while Steve, in one door, out another, hunted for her; then just as the train was pulling out, he glimpsed her again, safely aboard the Overland Limited. It was a hurry-up race to catch the last car, but Steve finally made it and, panting, came to rest in the club car. There another surprise awaited him. Zeke and Hank, unable to trust their boy friend out of their sight, had decided to go along.

A Sagebrush Romeo Without a Juliet

His efforts to become acquainted with the fair damsel on the long trek across the country were fruitless. Steve could pick a maverick out of a herd in any kind of a round-up but when it came to passing out the "haven't I met you before?" applesauce, he was a blowout. The chair, opposite her, in the diner was always occupied; her eyes never seemed to raise from the book she was reading. Even at the big terminal his efforts were fruitless and so the girl passed on into the whirlpool of Manhattan, while Steve, dejected and lonesome, went to call upon his old time friends at the University Club.

There began the first inkling of the "Manhattan Madness" that was to befall our young man from the West. "So you think New York is dead, do you? Well, we'll show you the town this time," was the chorus that greeted him. Then in the midst of their welcome, Steve, glancing out the great window on the avenue caught a fleeting glimpse of the lady of his heart, but before he could collect his hat and wits she had disappeared. "Say, fellows, I've got to meet that girl! Do any of you know her?" To his query they only shook their heads and looked at Steve with suspicion.

Encore Pictures

Then began Steve's frantic quest for the thrills of Manhattan. An endless round of cafes, theatres, night clubs, gayety surrounded him at every turn but the big boy sat back and looked on, as blasé as a taxi driver. "Your old town's dead," said Steve. "Sure, you have murders and hold-ups and such, but there's no thrill in those things. I expected Broadway to be wearing horns and smell of brimstone." His friends listened attentively and promised him a thrill the following night.

First Symptoms of "Manhattan Madness"

"The Tombs' Cafe" was Broadway's latest craze. It represented high life in New York's most famous and unpopular caravansary, the Tombs Prison. The police captain who escorted you to your table was in reality the head waiter, and the "bulls" who served you, even more than the law allowed, were waiters, while the jazz band in stripes, moaned the latest contributions from Tin-Pan-Alley. Steve glanced around, somewhat bored at this make-believe, when down the stairs, accompanied by the most brutal looking man he had ever seen, came the girl, a radiant picture. But there was a strange look in her eyes—a hidden fear; her every move broadcasted an S.O.S.

Now was his chance, thought Steve. "She's in trouble, I'll save her," but when he crossed to the table where she sat with her strange companion, the man let her attempted savior have a brass knuckled blow on the jaw and Steve took the count, while, with a muffled scream, the girl was hurried away.

When Steve awoke from his midnight adventure a letter awaited him. Count von Eckman desired that the young man from the West come to his house that night where a settlement would be made for his load of stock. A car would be waiting for him at ten o'clock.

If Steve had been of a superstitious nature a glance at the face of the chauffeur would have served as a warning, but, unsuspecting of impending dangers he entered the car, while Hank and Zeke, clinging to their hunch, found hiding space on running board and bumper and were carried with their friend, over lonely roads, to an impressive and solemn mansion far from the gleaming lights of the Great White Way.

Steve's reception by the Count was cordial. The papers concerning his deal were all prepared, cigars rested on the table at his elbow, but hardly had he started to read the document than a piercing scream echoed through the house and, in a fleeting glance, Steve saw the girl of his dreams grasped by brutal hands and dragged away. "Don't get excited," said the Count. "My ward, unfortunately, slightly deranged," and departed. But Steve could stand the suspense no longer. He had to find out

about this girl, and started in pursuit. Up the stairs he went, following the echo of that unhappy cry. Then darkness, a stumble, a trap door opened and he plunged down into a black dungeon. Burly hands grasped him, bound him tight, and he was left to ponder.

After long minutes of waiting a woman's hand touched him, severed the cords that bound him and, with a frightened voice, said, "Hurry! We're both in danger!" In the dim light they crawled out and into the hallway of the mysterious house. There new surprises awaited him. Walls opened and weird and brutal faces peered at him; trap doors slid apart and he was confronted by hidden menaces; burly fighters stepped from grandfather clocks. Entirely surrounded, every exit cut off, there was but one thing to do, fight his way out, save the girl and his own skin if humanely possible. Off came the tuxedo coat; fighting fists came into battle array and the war was on. Like a hurricane Steve leaped into the pack of enemies, over furniture, up stairs, down stairs, all the rules of the esteemed Marquis of Queensberry forgotten; like a wild man, charging the horde, crashing chairs, cracking heads. The roar of battle in his ears, the wild man from the West made slaughter while all about the room lay the victims of his fury.

Outside Hank and Zeke thundered on doors seeking entrance. Finally, with a crash, the big door left its hinges and they entered just as Steve was giving the final touches to his last adversary. Then came other visitors—his pals from the club. "What's all the fighting for?" they queried, and, putting Steve to rights, lead him from the room and into another surprise.

Everything Comes to Him Who Fights

A great banquet hall, glittering with lights, its board surrounded by a group of men, with bandaged hands, and a girl. At the head of the table a place awaited him.

"Just some of my theatrical friends who wanted to show you a few thrills, Old Dear," said his friend. "Now, you've had a touch of Manhattan Madness."

Appalled, humiliated and the fighting blood still surging through his veins, Steve crossed to the girl. "I suppose you, too, were in on this little surprise party." With a smile she nodded. Then Steve did the unexpected. A shrill whistle sounded and Hank and Zeke leaped into the room, guns drawn and ready to go over the top for their old Elko sidekick. "Keep 'em covered, boys, while I show this young lady how we rope balky mavericks out in God's country," and, without further ado, he lifted her in his arms and vanished through the door.

For hours, a puzzled driver listened to the sweet music of the taximeter as it clicked away its golden tune. Finally, at dawn, came a voice from the cab. "The young lady has agreed that Mrs. Steve O'Dare would be a pretty good name—drive to the Little Church Around the Corner."

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